

AETC News Clips



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16 Oct 01

No cases confirmed locally or in Texas

By CINDY TUMIEL

EXPRESS-NEWS STAFF WRITER

San Antonio, like the rest of the nation, returned to work Monday to worry about the mail.

Hazardous-material teams in San Antonio and other cities scrambled throughout the day in response to calls from nervous residents about suspicious mail, mysterious powders or oozing liquids that were found in envelopes, in packages, on floors and even in cans of food.

Despite the widespread jitters, no cases of anthrax contamination have been confirmed locally or in Texas since the Sept. 11 attacks.

Part of the H.E. Butt Grocery

Co.'s downtown headquarters was evacuated and three employees were taken to a local hospital and then released after a worker turned up ill days after handling a powdered substance found in a piece of mail. A Northeast Side post office was evacuated when postal employees found two leaking parcels.

Buildings at Randolph AFB were evacuated, and a hallway at Audie Murphy VA Hospital was closed off. One man called police when he got nervous over a white substance inside a can of pork and beans that officials said was probably globules of fat.

Health departments in San

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Nervous residents keep workers busy

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Antonio and throughout the state also were busy with calls from doctors and patients who wanted to know more about anthrax and the tests to detect it.

But if San Antonio was nervous, it was hardly alone. As more confirmed reports of mailed anthrax spores came to light in Florida, Nevada, New York and the District of Columbia, tension levels rose everywhere.

Mailrooms and delivery services across the nation put new security measures in place, warning mailroom employees to be wary of misspellings of common names and words and to look for powdery substances on packages or excessive or inadequate postage.

San Antonio's Hazardous Materials Response Team responded to 10 calls Monday, almost as many as it handles in a typical month.

In some cases, fire officials are considering the possibility that some of the harmless substances had been sent as pranks, Assistant Fire Chief Carl Wedige said.

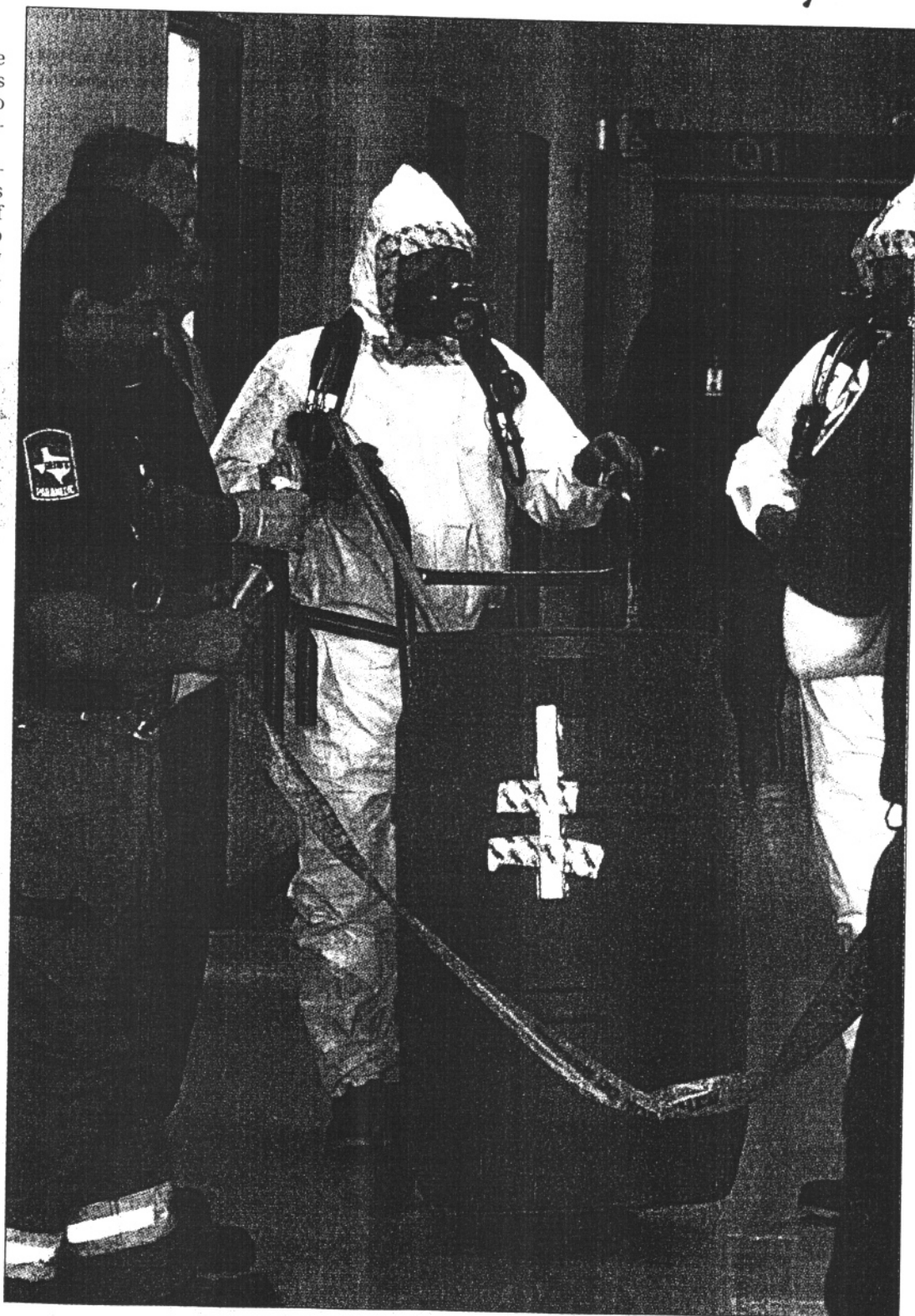
Other calls were the result of genuine concern by employees and residents who came across unknown substances, he said.

Texas Health Department spokesman Doug McBride acknowledged public officials are sending out contradictory messages, telling the public to remain alert but at the same time, stay calm. Still, he said, people shouldn't panic.

"We're walking the thin line between wanting people to know what steps to take, without inciting them to fear," McBride said.

The rash of calls started early in the day, as workers across the city dealt with the morning mail.

Workers at a Northeast Side post office became alarmed when two packages began leaking. Liquid oozed from one cellophane-wrapped parcel, and white powder trickled out of another package at the post office on Landmark 35 Drive, off of Interstate 35.



KAREN L. SHAW/STAFF

Members of the San Antonio Fire Department Hazardous Material Unit removed samples of a white powdery substance found in a women's restroom at the Audie Murphy VA Hospital on Monday. Calls from across the city kept hazardous-materials workers busy.



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Nervous residents ... Cont'd

The building was evacuated, and hazardous-materials officials cordoned off the area. Two employees who came in contact with the packages were decontaminated, and the parcels were taken to a local lab to be analyzed.

At H-E-B, a 39-year-old man reported he had opened a computer disk with a powdery substance inside on Friday, but he didn't report it right away because "he didn't want to be an alarmist," spokeswoman Trish DeBerry said. But over the weekend, he began to feel ill with flu-like symptoms.

The man and two others in the office who had contact with the substance were decontaminated, then taken to University Hospital for tests. They later were released, and preliminary tests indicated no anthrax was present.

A parent volunteer at Hillcrest Elementary School on the South Side was opening mail Monday afternoon when she noticed that she had a white powder on her arm that caused her to itch.

Police and firefighters took

samples of the powder and her blood for testing, but they suspect the powder was actually limestone from behind the school.

Powder or other substances prompted responses at Randolph AFB, the Audie Murphy VA Hospital, a U-Haul storage facility on West Avenue and a QVC shopping call center on the Northwest Side.

At one point, a crew was dispatched to a man's house on Thousand Oaks because he had opened a can of pork and beans and became suspicious of a white film inside the lid.

Fire officials suspect the substance was nothing more than fat, but they treated it like any other call.

District Chief Koby Cantu said the multiple calls throughout the day proved frustrating, but he didn't blame anyone for being too cautious.

"If my wife sees anything, she's going to call it in. I'll probably call it in too," Cantu said. "That's the way life is these days."

Metropolitan Health District epidemiologist Roger Sanchez said his office was peppered with calls from local physicians who wanted to know what to do about patients worried they had been exposed to anthrax.

Doctors are being told to collect a nasal swab from the patient and send it to their regular testing laboratory, Sanchez said. If that lab finds potential anthrax, then the sample will be sent to the Health Department for further testing.

Sanchez said he understands the public's concern, but he added that anthrax is difficult to turn into a biological weapon.

"You need to get a very large dose of the spores before you get the disease," he said. "And it is not communicable from person to person."

A city ordinance calls for those responsible for the release of hazardous materials to be billed to help cover the Fire Department's expenses. Since the number of calls began to swell last week, however, investigators have not yet determined who

should be billed in any of the cases.

San Antonio FBI spokesman Darren Holmes said people who send such packages in the mail can face a federal charge of threatening to use a weapon of mass destruction, which carries a penalty of up to life imprisonment.

Since last week, the FBI has retrieved and tested 10 letters, but none tested positive for any biological agent, Holmes said.

Elsewhere in Texas, the emergency room at Memorial Hermann The Woodlands Hospital was temporarily quarantined Monday while tests were run on a white powder a woman brought into the hospital.

Preliminary tests on the material were negative for anthrax, a hospital spokeswoman said.

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Staff Writers Amy Dorsett, Karisa King, Emily Robinson, William Day, Sig Christenson, Ihosvani Rodriguez, Sonja Garza and Edmund Tijerina contributed to this report.



ABC producer's son had visited mom's office

BY GARY MARTIN

EXPRESS-NEWS WASHINGTON BUREAU

WASHINGTON — An anthrax scare that has gripped the nation intensified Monday when a letter sent to the office of Senate Majority Leader Tom Daschle tested positive for the deadly bacteria and the skin form of the disease struck the 7-month-old son of an ABC News producer.

In a news conference Monday night, David Westin, president of ABC News, announced that a 7-month-old boy who had been at the network's offices on West 66th Street in Manhattan late last month was later found to be infected with cutaneous anthrax. He said the boy had been hospi-

talized and was responding well to treatment.

He said he assumed that the boy had been infected at the network's office. Last week, officials announced that an NBC News employee was also treated for the disease, which was traced to a letter sent to that network.

Earlier Monday, a powdery substance in a letter prompted Capitol police to quarantine Daschle's office, begin treatment with antibiotics for aides and post changes to mail procedures for lawmakers.

"Effective immediately, please suspend opening all mail delivered to your office," blared a memorandum sent by Rep. Mar-

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Anthrax fear deepening with new infections

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tin Frost, D-Dallas, the House Democratic Caucus chairman.

Frost told lawmakers that even though the mail is "undergoing additional security screening, please pay attention to all mail delivered to your office, particularly heavily taped mail."

Officials also said Monday night that a 73-year-old mailroom employee at a group of tabloid newspapers in Boca Raton, Fla., had the inhaled form of anthrax and was being treated.

The anthrax scare has spread across the nation after law enforcement agencies confirmed cases in three states. A tabloid photo editor in Boca Raton died from exposure, and NBC employees were treated with antibiotics in New York. A letter at the Microsoft offices in Reno, Nev., also tested positive for anthrax spores.

President Bush urged Americans to be cautious about letters "that come from somebody you may not know, letters that look suspicious."

Speaking at the White House, Bush said there might be a possible link between the terrorist Osama bin Laden and the rash of anthrax cases.

"The key thing for the American people is to be cautious," Bush said.

Capitol police Lt. Dan Nichols said the letter to Daschle was opened by a staff member who noticed the powdery contents. Two initial field tests on the substance came back positive for anthrax.

The substance was sent to Fort Detrick, Md., for more conclusive tests, Nichols said.

Daschle said about 40 people work in his Hart Senate Office Building. As a precaution, all employees are being treated with antibiotics.

The Senate majority leader said the attack "disappointed and angered" him, and he called other congressional leaders to warn them of possible mailings.

Bush said the letter that arrived at Daschle's office was heavily taped. Tony Esposito, a postal inspector, said the letter was mailed Sept. 18 from Trenton, N.J. — the same place of origin as the tainted letter sent to NBC's Tom Brokaw.

The incident prompted many lawmakers to revise mailroom duties. House and Senate aides huddled over procedures for offices on Capitol Hill and in home states and congressional districts.

Larry Neal, a spokesman for Sen. Phil Gramm, R-Texas, said aides have been told that "they should take extra care and exercise due diligence in dealing with such mundane things as opening the mail."

"By the same token, Sen. Gramm represents 20 million Texans, and the chief means by which they communicate their views is by the mail," Neal said. "We will continue to open the mail."

The U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service ordered employees nationwide to stop opening mail after a package with suspicious powder was delivered in Vermont Saturday.

The agency is expected to be back in full operation today, but the scare brought a temporary halt to accepting tens of thousands of forms, including applications for immigration permits, which the agency receives daily in the mail.

The U.S. Postal Service announced it will send a warning to 135 million U.S. homes, businesses and other addresses cautioning them about the threat posed by biological hazards moving through the U.S. mail, and it will provide gloves and masks immediately to all mail-handling employees.

The Postal Inspection Service has reassigned the vast majority of its 1,900 inspectors nationwide and 1,400 postal police officers to the threat. The inspectors will be at postal facilities to isolate suspicious packages and to be a visible presence to reassure the public.

U.S. Postmaster General John Potter, at a trade convention for mailing companies in Denver, also announced the formation of a new federal mail security task force that is focusing on potential biological and chemical hazards.

The letter sent to Daschle's office was one of countless threats, many of them hoaxes, that were frightening citizens and overburdening the nation's public health system.

In Trenton, a mail carrier and a post office maintenance worker were being tested for anthrax after reporting possible symptoms.

At the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta, laboratories are working overtime to test possible substances for anthrax, while officials are trying to get a handle on the number of threats and hoaxes nationwide.

"I think it is fair to say that around the country there are hundreds, if not thousands, of instances where law enforcement folks are working with the public health community to investigate" possible cases of deliberate anthrax poisoning, said Dr. David Fleming, the deputy director of the centers. "We are working around the clock here at CDC, and I would venture to say that most local and state public health agencies are doing the same."

Among those receiving threats were abortion clinics, which have been the targets of anthrax scares in the past.

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Staff Writer Dane Schiller, the Associated Press, New York Times and Knight Ridder contributed to this report.



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Nacho Guarache

by Leo Garza



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Institute moves into KellyUSA

Its events will advertise site

By BILL DAY

EXPRESS-NEWS BUSINESS WRITER

When officials at KellyUSA decided to construct a new 77,000-square-foot office building in the former Kelly AFB, their intent was to provide a place for upscale business tenants.

Now that the building is finished, not only does KellyUSA have the tenants it desired, but it has a chance to market its

other buildings to more prospective tenants.

Among the first to move into the new building just inside the main gate is the University of Texas at San Antonio's Institute for Economic Development. Institute officials say their presence will help advertise KellyUSA's benefits.

"Literally thousands of small businesses come to our workshops each year," said Bob McKinley, the institute's assistant vice president.

Once those businesses' leaders see the space that KellyUSA, an aerospace-themed business park, has for lease, they may

want to move in.

Parent Child Inc. and General Dynamics will join the institute in the new building.

"Pretty much the whole building is leased out," said KellyUSA spokeswoman Teresa Niño.

Moving to KellyUSA from the Cypress Tower north of downtown will help reunite the 90-employee institute's four main programs.

The Small Business Development Center, the Minority Business Development Center, the Southwest Trade Adjustment Assistance Center and the Center for Economic Development were split between two floors in

the Cypress Tower, but will all share the KellyUSA building's second floor.

"This move allows us to be all together again," said Judith Ingalls, director of the Small Business Development Center's technology center.

It'll also provide more room for classroom and seminar space, as well as more chances for business students to get hands-on experience.

"Right now we have about 10-15 interns here," McKinley said. "We will have doubled or even tripled that over there."

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AETC
BASES

News Clips

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Package explodes at Manitou

Contents could be part of a biological attack

By Paula Doze

Frederick Leader

Friday afternoon was all but normal for employees of the Southwest Juvenile Center in Manitou, a UPS driver and members of Tillman County Emergency Services.

According to sources inside the Center, an employee opened

a package that "exploded" filling the room and coating a couple of employees with an unknown white powdery substance.

Members of Tillman County Sheriff's Office, the Oklahoma Highway Patrol, Frederick Fire Department, Emergency Operations personnel, Frederick Police Department, and Tillman County District 1 employees,

cordoned off an area three blocks around the Center, placing the entire area under quarantine. The FBI, Allus Air Force Base HazMat Team, and the State Department of Health were alerted to the situation and personnel from all three were responding to the site.

According to sources inside the facility, the box had a return

address from a medical supply company located in Fort Lauderdale, Florida.

According to Supervisors with UPS, the driver said he had delivered several other packages in the Frederick area that had the same labeling. As of presstime members of the State Department of Health were trying to locate those packages, to check their contents.

During a statement made by President Bush Thursday evening, a warning was issued that all law enforcement agencies should be on high alert several days preceding the speech. The FBI issued the warning after receiving intelligence information that lead them to believe more attacks were possible inside the United States and at American facilities abroad.

Unconfirmed sources said members of the FBI were investigating as many as 15 possible Bioterrorism threats around the State of Oklahoma Thursday. The FBI also warned of the possibility of bioterrorism by mail, saying people should beware of packages containing white powdery substances.

Emergency services had hoped that this is nothing more than a bad prank, but until the substance is tested and a positive identification of the substance is made, every precaution is being taken to protect employees of the facility as well as in the surrounding community.

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EDITORS NOTE: According to a spokesman from the Tillman County Sheriff's Department Saturday, anthrax has been ruled out as the substance contained in the package, but the exact substance has not yet been identified. After the substance was determined not be anthrax, the quarantine was lifted and employees were allowed to leave the facility at approximately 9 p.m.

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Altus AFB OK Newsclips

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Powder spurs quarantine of 150 people

By Mark A. Hutchison
Staff Writer

MANITOU — A package containing white powder was opened Friday at a juvenile center, prompting a nine-hour quarantine of about 150 people.

The powder tested negative for anthrax and other agents when the Altus Air Force Base hazardous materials team examined it.

"This has been happening all over the country the last couple years, but the public is just now paying serious attention to it," said Dr. Michael Crutcher, state epidemiologist. "It almost always turns out to be nothing."

After the substance tested negative at the facility, the quarantine order was lifted. Employees were being allowed to leave by 9 p.m.

The order came amid nationwide fears that terrorists may try to use anthrax or chemical agents.

A warehouse employee at the Southwest Oklahoma Juvenile Center opened the package

about 12:30 p.m. It was from a Jacksonville, Fla., medical supply company that the center regularly uses, said Rhonda Burgess, spokeswoman for the state Office of Juvenile Affairs.

Company officials told center officials that no white powder should have been in the box.

The Tillman County sheriff's office, fire departments from Frederick and Manitou, a hazardous materials team from Altus Air Force Base and the Ok-

lahoma Highway Patrol secured the center's perimeter.

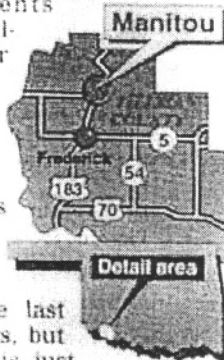
The FBI also was contacted.

Burgess, who was among those quarantined Friday, said the center has not received threats.

The Tillman County sheriff's office took the substance to the state Health Department in Oklahoma City late Friday, where it will be tested, officials said.

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CONTRIBUTING Staff writer Jean Plunberg



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Altus AFB OK Newsclips

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Officer at Altus was in Pentagon

ALTUS AIR FORCE BASE — Americans will forever remember what they were doing when they first heard the news of the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks.

This holds especially true for one Altus Air Force Base officer who was inside the Pentagon when the plane crashed into it.

Col. Robert J. Settle II, 97th Air Mobility Wing vice commander, served as an Air Force planner for joint and national security matters at the Pentagon.

The colonel was coming out of a staff meeting with other officers when an executive informed them a plane had crashed into the World Trade Center in New York.

"After I was informed of the first crash, I proceeded to my office area, and during this time was when the second plane flew into the World Trade Center," Settle explained. "I saw the news on television and then walked over to the flight surgeon's office for a scheduled physical and began filling out my paperwork and medical information."

Ironically, on his way to the surgeon's office with a fellow service member, Settle discussed the ongoing events and the possibility of the Pentagon being a target.

"We discussed how easy it was for an aircraft to fly over the Pentagon because of its flight path in conjunction with Reagan International Airport," the colonel said.

Two loud blasts

"But soon after I began filling out my medical paperwork in the surgeon's office, I heard two

loud blasts. Nothing shook, but you could feel the presence of something unfamiliar. After a moment, I stuck my head out the door into the hallway and realized we were evacuating the building. As I exited the building, I could see smoke coming from the outer portion of the Pentagon as I looked out a window, where I was about 200 yards away from the crash area."

As people were evacuated to the outside of the building, security forces personnel warned that there might be another aircraft heading toward the Pentagon, Settle said.

Lots of emotion

"This plane turned out being the aircraft that went down in western Pennsylvania," he said. "But as the number of people being evacuated grew outside, accountability by office began and continued. It was during this time I took a look around and noticed a lot of emotion, people weeping and shaking as they made their way across the parade ground area of the Pentagon en route to a safe location and distance. I then borrowed a cell phone and called my wife to assure her that I was fine and at a safe distance from the crash, and that I would probably be heading home soon."

Settle took the metro home around 11:30 a.m., and during the ride he began to think about the importance of military service in times of crisis and importance.

"Whenever there's a world crisis or action ongoing it's a reminder that it's what we're trained to respond to," he explained. "I thought about my upcoming assignment to Altus and

what a worthwhile time it's going to be, to go back and work operationally in our Air Force and help support our global mobility requirements."

Back in operational unit

Afterward, the colonel again reinforced his thoughts about being in an instrumental position at an operational installation.

"It's great to be a part of what's going on. And I'm excited about serving at an operational unit again, rather than in an office doing a staff function."

Settle also expressed his grat-

itude and appreciation for the people who showed their concern for his safety through phone calls and e-mails.

"Probably the first thing I did when I arrived at home on Sept. 11 was call my mother. According to my wife, she just wanted to hear my voice," he explained. "It was also very humbling when family, friends and fellow service members, some even overseas, expressed their love and concern for me, my wife and children during this time. It's times like this when the Air Force family is most visible and at its best."

THE LAWTON CONSTITUTION

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Air Force group to perform patriotic show

Lana Sweeten-Shults

Times Record News

Tops in Blue has always reveled in the red, white and blue. But showing its true blue colors of patriotism never seemed so apparent as now — when patriotism has soared to an all-time high.

In a time when stores can't keep the American flag stocked on their shelves, Tops in Blue — the Air Force's premier amateur performing group — has heeded the call of its mission: to entertain and to thicken the morale of the troops.

Like Bob Hope, who helped soldiers in the Korean and Vietnam wars steel their resolve with a laugh and a song, Tops in Blue has traveled to bases around the world to boost American morale.

The group will do the same when it stops in Wichita Falls Monday night at Memorial Auditorium — the second performance of a recently retooled show designed to address last month's terrorist attacks.

"Magic and Music" debuted at Lackland Air Force Base in San Antonio last week

with a recently added segment that pays tribute to the victims and heroes of Sept. 11.

"We were actually in Europe when it all happened," said Carol Sudy, tour coordinator for Tops in Blue, the amateur Air Force entertainment group based in San Antonio. "We couldn't travel anywhere, so the team took the opportunity to add to the show a tribute to the new-found heroes."

And even though the show does embrace a sense of reverence, Sudy said it foremost strives to be uplifting.

"Although we do a tribute to the people that were killed... we also have an upbeat message — to say America is still proud," she said.

That message didn't fall on deaf ears when it played in San Antonio recently.

"The basics in San Antonio were constantly on their feet," she said, adding how the response reflects the nation's current mood of patriotic fervor. "... It was a fabulous response. It's good to see how positive they were."

The show retains its original concept of combining music with sleight of hand-type magic, along with adding songs like "Hero for Today" and "This is America."

Don't miss it

What: Tops in Blue in concert

Where: Memorial Auditorium, 1300 Seventh St.

Admission: Free, but arrive early. Seats go fast.

When: At 8 p.m. Monday

Sheppard AFB, Wichita Falls, Texas
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Email: www.trnonline.com

Law complex to rise from ashes

Lynda Stringer

Times Record News

A brand new Sheppard Law Complex is rising out of the ashes at Sheppard Air Force Base — one year after an arsonist torched the 55-year-old legal building on Friday, Oct. 13, 2000.

The new state-of-the-art center broke ground recently, and so far its foundation has been laid on the same site where the old center burned down. A new courtroom will be built adjacent to the law offices. The target completion date is March 2002.

The anniversary date and the number 13 have a history of irony since flames licked at the law center and reduced it to rubble.

Staff Judge Advocate Col. Anne Burman said after bunking with the Sheppard Hospital staff for several months it was Friday, April 13, 2001, when they moved in to a 13-section trailer complex. On Friday, July 13, 2001, they received word the funding for the new center had been OK'd.

But Burman said her staff was not spooked by the Friday the 13th coincidences.

"We were thinking all this is good luck and kept on the positive side," she said. "We're keeping justice going; our attitude and morale is up, and everyone is rolling their sleeves up. It's a real blessing."

The raging fire, fueled by huge amounts of legal documents — and an arsonist's accelerant — gutted the law building, which included the law offices and the courtroom and the home to 29 lawyers and paralegals.

"It was a horrible moment

for them to watch their law center go up in flames," Burman said. "They were in tears, but they've come out of this stronger."

The frame-style building — described as a "tinder-box" — was one of only three World War II-era buildings left at Sheppard.

In the midst of the rubble at daybreak, Burman said the door to the judge's chamber was hanging open. "Hanging from the hook on the door unscathed was the judge's robe. Now, that's the power of justice."

On the day of the fire, court had been in session and the trial had recessed for the night, but Burman said they didn't miss a step.

"The commander authorized the hospital to clear out the first floor of one wing and they mobilized so we could get in there in the middle of the night," Burman said.

With court-reporting equipment borrowed from Altus AFB, a makeshift courtroom was up and running by 9 a.m.

"The court reporters had recovered tapes; the evidence and the jury's notes and prevented a mistrial," Burman said. In fact, they didn't lose any legal documents because there was so much "redundancy of records," she said. They were also able to recover most of the information on computer hard drives.

They worked out of the hospital for six months before the trailer complex was delivered and set up across from the "footprint of the old building," Burman said. The new courthouse and law office will be side by side and the legal staff is looking forward to moving in.

"If you talked to my folks, they're the ones slugging through the smoky paper and still come back out of this with their shoulders back and their heads held high," Burman said. "They're going to keep the flow going."

There's still no break in the arson case. But, she said justice will prevail in the end.

"We deliver society's justice, and I figure God takes care of the rest," Burman said. "What we don't catch catches up with people."

The "13" phenomenon will carry over into the new complex. Burman accepted a gift of a print depicting the Oklahoma City bombing for the new building. The limited-edition print — selected at random — is No. 13 out of 100.

Staff Writer Lynda Stringer can be reached by calling (940) 720-3461 or (800) 627-1646 ext. 461; or by e-mail at stringerl@wtr.com

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Email: www.trnonline.com



A Sheppard Air Force Base firefighter walks past the gutted Law Center after an early-morning blaze swept through the base complex Friday, Oct. 13, 2000, in this file photo.



Gary Lawson/Times Record News

Investigators at Sheppard Air Force Base look for clues as to what sparked a fire at the base Law Center early Friday, Oct. 13, 2000, in this file photo.

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